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CALENDAR



TIMOTHY KRAUSE

THRU SEPT 6
Thurs 1–9pm; Fri–Sun 12–5 pm • Free
EXHIBITION: IF A SONG COULD BE FREEDOM...ORGANIZED SOUNDS OF RESISTANCE. Featuring the exhibition sleeves of over 200 political recordings that reveal the broad scope of the intersection of music and politics. Flyers, lyric sheets, buttons, publications and other ephemera are also on display. Interference Archive
131 8th St #4, Bklyn
interferencearchive.org

THRU NOV 1
Wed 11am–6 pm, Thurs 11am–10pm, Fri–Sun, 11am–6pm • \$16 suggested
EXHIBITION: LGBT RIGHTS IN SOUTH AFRICA. Zanele Muholi meshes her work in photography, video and installation with human rights activism to create visibility for the black lesbian and transgender communities of South Africa. “Zanele Muholi: Isibonelo/ Evidence” is the most comprehensive museum presentation to date of Muholi’s work. Sackler Center for Feminist Art
Brooklyn Museum
200 Eastern Pkwy, Bklyn
brooklynmuseum.org

TUE JULY 7
6:30pm • \$5
BOOK LAUNCH AND DISCUSSION: *FIREFIGHT*. NY *Daily News* reporter and author Ginger Adams Otis will be joined by members of the Vulcan Society, an organization of Black firefighters, as she discusses her new book on the century-long effort to integrate the overwhelmingly white New York Fire Department. Brooklyn Historical Society
128 Pierrepont St
718-222-4111 • brooklynhistory.org

WED JULY 8
7pm • Free
COMMUNITY FORUM: THE FUTURE OF BLUESTOCKINGS. Bluestockings Bookstore & Café recently renewed its lease for five years. Join in this community brainstorming forum to discuss how Bluestockings can increase its financial support to be able to keep the space open during that time. Bluestockings Bookstore & Café
172 Allen St
212-777-6028 • bluestockings.com

THU JULY 9–SAT JULY 25
8pm • Free
THEATER: SHAKESPEARE IN THE PARKING LOT. Shakespeare in the Parking Lot is back for its 21st season in a new location on the Lower East Side. The troupe will be performing *As You Like It*, one of Shakespeare’s most beloved romantic comedies, with a steampunk twist to the action. 114 Norfolk St
Parking lot behind the Clemente Soto Velez Cultural and Education Center
shakespeareintheparkinglot.com

SAT JULY 18
10am–4pm • Free
EVENT: CITY OF WATER DAY. The City of Water Day festival is a day-long event honoring and celebrating the water surrounding the New York City metropolitan area. The celebration includes boat tours, cardboard kayak races, numerous kids’ activities, professional water activity instruction, vendors and more. Metropolitan Waterfront Alliance
Governors Island & Maxwell Place Park in Hoboken
212-935-9831 • cityofwaterday.org

SUN JULY 19
7–9pm • Free
SCREENING: *TIME IS ILLMATIC*. The documentary of famed hip-hop artist Nas and the story of his groundbreaking debut album, “Time Is Illmatic,” 20 years ago. Screened in Queensbridge, Nas’s childhood home. Queensbridge Park
41st Rd & 40th Ave, Qns
cityparksfoundation.org

THU JULY 23–SUN JULY 26
All day • Sliding scale
SUMMER INTENSIVE: TO ADVANCE WORKING CLASS CONSCIOUSNESS. The Marxist Education Project will host a four-day summer intensive of collaborative study and discussion featuring a wide range of presenters. The aim is to give participants the tools to better understand actually existing capitalism and to advance anti-capitalist movement building work. For more, see page 15. Brooklyn Commons
388 Atlantic Ave, Bklyn
marxedproject.org

SAT JULY 25 & SUN JULY 26
11am–6pm • Free
FESTIVAL: NYC POETRY. Enjoy two days of 250 poets, vendors, interactive poetry activities and more within the poetic confines of Governors Island. Governors Island
newyorkcitypoetryfestival.com

SAT JULY 25
2–6pm • Free
STREET DANCING: FOLK FEET IN THE STREET: AFRO-CARIBBEAN MASQUERADES AND STREET PROCESSIONS. The Guyanese Cultural Association and Brooklyn Arts Council present an afternoon of Afro-Caribbean masquerades and street processions, including an instructional demo of tradi-

tional Guyanese masquerades. Newkirk Ave will be closed to traffic between East 28th and 29th streets. 2806 Newkirk Ave between E 28th & 29th St.
718-625-0080 • brooklynartscouncil.org

SUN JULY 26
1–5pm • Free
FESTIVAL: THE 9TH ANNUAL BAY RIDGE ARAB AMERICAN BAZAAR. The Eid al-Fitr celebration marks the end of Ramadan and global Muslim unity with traditional Arab dance and dance workshops. Shore Road Park
79th St & Shore Rd, Bklyn
718-745-3523 • arabamericanny.org

SAT AUG 1-8
Nights • \$5 suggested
FILM FESTIVAL: ADVOCACY AND ANARCHY SHAPING A CITY. The Museum of Reclaimed Urban Space will host its third annual film festival. Shorts, documentaries and features will focus each night on different movements that have helped shape the city. Various East Village and Lower East Side community gardens
morus.org

MON AUG 3
6:30pm • Free
DISCUSSION: NOXIOUS NEW YORK: RACE, CLASS & GARBAGE. This is a second lecture of a three part series, “Garbage and the City: Two Centuries of Dirt, Debris and Disposal.” Historian Julie Sze will examine the link between NYC garbage policies, race, class and how disenfranchised communities have challenged the policymaking behind garbage disposal to better their neighborhoods and lives. New York Academy of Medicine
1216 Fifth Ave
212-534-1672 • mcny.org

JULY



ZANELE MUHOLI

ALL THE PARKING LOTS A STAGE: Members of the Drilling Company perform last summer in a Lower East Side municipal parking lot. The troupe will kick off its 21st season of Shakespeare in the Parking Lot on July 9, at its new asphalt home behind the Clemente Soto Velez Cultural Center, with a performance of *As You Like It*.

SELF-PORTRAIT: By queer South African photographer Zanele Muholi. Her photography of black lesbian and transgender people in South Africa is on display at the Brooklyn Museum.

ALBANY HITS TENANTS WITH ‘ONE BIG UGLY’

BY STEVEN WISHNIA

The four-year extension of the state’s rent laws enacted by the legislature on June 26 will do next to nothing to stem the escalation of rents and the hemorrhaging loss of affordable apartments in New York City and its inner suburbs.

The bill, included in the kind of omnibus measure that Albany slang terms a “One Big Ugly” — its multitudinous provisions include one that lets Governor Andrew Cuomo perform weddings — contains some token improvements to the rent-stabilization laws, which protect about 2 million people in 1 million apartments in the city and Nassau, Westchester and Rockland counties. It raises the threshold for deregulating vacant apartments from \$2,500 per month to \$2,700, with that figure indexed to the increases allowed by the city’s Rent Guidelines Board beginning next year. It slightly reduces the rent increases permitted for major capital improvements. It says landlords can’t claim an automatic 20 percent increase on vacant apartments if the previous tenant had been living there for less than four years and was paying less than the legal maximum. It increases the fines for landlords convicted of harassing tenants by \$1,000.

It also extends the 421-a tax subsidy for housing construction for four years, so long as the real-estate industry and the building-trades unions can agree within the next six months on when construction workers on buildings getting those tax breaks should be paid prevailing union-scale wages. Separate “poor door” entrances are no longer permitted, but Mayor Bill de Blasio’s proposed “mansion tax” was killed. The reforms slightly increase the percentage of below-market apartments that developments in the program must include — the mayor’s office says that the new 421-a will create an additional 11,600 affordable units over the next 10 years, though it does not require any that people who make less than \$31,000 a year can afford.

The “Big Ugly’s” biggest failure, however, is that it does not repeal the 1997 state law that lets landlords deregulate vacant apartments. The Community Service Society estimates that 87,500 apartments will be taken out of rent stabilization over the next four years.

This was a crucial failure, because that enables the continued erosion of rent regulations. If current trends continue, given inflation and people moving, eventually the only regulated apartments left in the metropolitan area will be a handful occupied by the elderly and in the city’s poorest areas. Vacancy deregulation also gives landlords a lucrative incentive to harass rent-stabilized tenants, especially in gentrifying neighborhoods.

Although Mayor de Blasio advocated repealing vacancy decontrol, he undermined its chances when he endorsed renewing the 421-a program. As that program was also expiring this month and real estate wanted it badly, it could have been a bargaining chip to win concessions from the Senate. The mayor’s deliberate omission of a prevailing-wage requirement in his proposal also infuriated the city’s building-trades unions — who are strongly pro-development, but have been increasingly allied with tenant groups over the past two years in a campaign to ensure that “affordable” housing is built union. His support of nonunion construction also gave Cuomo the opportunity to hypocritically whack him as “anti-worker.”

The failure to repeal vacancy decontrol reinforces the most fatalistic view possible of Albany — that strengthening rent regulations is impossible as long

as the Republicans have a majority in the Senate (or a Democratic majority narrow enough so a few switching sides can flip it, as happened in 2009 and 2011). New York City can’t enact stronger rent laws on its own because of a 1971 state law that accompanied a short-lived attempt to decontrol all vacant apartments.

The Senate is gerrymandered for GOP control by drawing all upstate districts with the legal minimum population and all city districts with the legal maximum. This cheats the city out of at least two seats. Districts are also geographically gerrymandered. To protect Martin Golden of Bay Ridge, one of two Republican senators from the city, the mostly black and Latino housing projects of Coney Island and Bensonhurst, contiguous to his district, were excised and connected to Democrat Diane Savino’s Staten Island district by the outer edge of the Belt Parkway.

In an honest political environment, this might not be relevant. Upstate and Long Island Republicans might be ideologically opposed to rent regulations, but they could conceivably be willing to trade votes on the issue for something that actually affects their districts. But with the New York City real-estate industry the biggest single funder of GOP legislative campaigns, they are not going to bite the hands that buy their ads.

Governor Cuomo, also heavily financed by real-estate interests, has contributed tremendously to this situation. While he endorsed the one-house Assembly bill that would have repealed vacancy decontrol, he did nothing to get

LANDLORDS WILL CONTINUE TO HAVE A LUCRATIVE INCENTIVE TO HARASS RENT-STABILIZED TENANTS.

the Senate to approve it. Cuomo’s supposed support for stronger rent laws is as empty as his support for medical marijuana — yes, the state legalized it last year, but due to restrictions he insisted on, no actual sick people will be able to receive any actual cannabis.

Cuomo also enabled the Republicans to retain control of the Senate in 2012, when he accepted their gerrymandering plan. Last year, in order to win the Working Families Party endorsement and avert a strong third-party challenge to his re-election, he pledged to campaign for Democratic Senate candidates — and immediately reneged on it, making only a few token, last-minute appearances.

The deal “proves that Albany is just as dysfunctional and money-driven as ever,” the Real Rent Reform coalition said in a statement. “This deal is a sellout and a betrayal by a governor who ran as a Democrat and promised to stand up for tenants, but governs as a pro-corporate Republican who’s only looking out for the millionaires and billionaires who fund his campaign,” added Ava Farkas of the Metropolitan Council on Housing. “We are disappointed, but unfortunately not surprised. Money and corruption won, and tenants and working families lost.”

A version of this article originally appeared on Gothamist.

SIGNS OF THE TIMES

Soaring commercial rents are driving New York’s small businesses into the ground. In Boerum Hill, Brooklyn, the owners of Jesse’s Deli face eviction at the end of July because they can’t afford a rent hike from \$4,000 to \$10,000 per month, says Mohamad Itayim (right), founder Jesse’s son. The neighborhood, including the designers of the anti-gentrification posters in the deli’s windows (far right) has rallied in support of the 25-year-old deli. But, the landlord hasn’t budged.

— INDYPENDENT STAFF



July 2015 THE INDEPENDENT

WHITENESS AT THE EDGE

BY NICHOLAS POWERS

The man begged the killer to stop. “I have to do it,” Dylann Roof said. He reloaded his gun. “You rape our women and you’re taking over the country.” He looked at people cringing on the floor and picked one. Shots echoed.

ON JUNE 17, news anchors told the nation that a white male had gunned down nine Black people at the Emanuel A.M.E. Church in Charleston, South Carolina. Television screens across the country showed police tape, numb faces and then him, the murderer, led away in handcuffs.

The shock of deadly racism cut short the bizarre theater of Rachel Dolezal, the now-former president of the Spokane, Washington, N.A.A.C.P. chapter. For years, she lived as a light-skinned Black woman until her parents “outed” her. They showed the world a photo of Dolezal as a blonde, blue-eyed white teenager — a very different Rachel than the one people knew, with dark frizzy curls and tan skin. The Internet blew up until she appeared on television and said in a brittle voice that she only “identifies” as Black.

The media overlap of the Aryan race warrior and the race traitor showed two people driven to opposite ends of whiteness by anxiety over their identity. The American Dream is collapsing just as we tip into a non-white majority, intensifying racist nostalgia for some, dissolving it for others. The Confederate flag-waving Roof and kinky-haired Dolezal tried to solve private crises with self-recreation. Unknowingly, they exposed the fractured state of whiteness.

WE’RE LOSING THE COUNTRY

“The white man thinks he’s losing the country,” comedian Chris Rock joked in his 1996 routine “Bring the Pain.” He imitated a redneck: “Affirmative action and illegal aliens, we’re fucking losing the country.” Rock looked around, “Shut the fuck up. White people ain’t losing shit. If ya’ll losing, who’s winning? It ain’t us!”

Nineteen years later, what surprises is how Rock echoed, in vulgate, scholar Theodore Allen’s *The Invention of the White Race*, in which he posits that the “white race” is a “ruling class social formation.” In other words, it’s not enough to say race is a social construct with no genetic basis. Nor is it enough to say, as historian Winthrop Jordan did, that slavery was an “unthinking decision” by European colonists, who associated dark skin with heathenism, savagery and sex.

Instead, Allen says that the “white race” was created by the ruling class, which split the working class on the color line by granting privileges to European migrants. They became a buffer against the Blacks and Native Americans even as they were exploited by the rich. Generations later, their descendants would be mocked by a Black comedian for exactly this blind spot, poor whites obsessing that they are “losing the country” to even poorer Blacks and immigrants.

THROUGH THE LOOKING GLASS

“Americaaaaaaa,” he shouted, splaying his fingers in the style of the band Kiss, tongue out. “Hmmm. That’s kind of scary white,” I said. My friend laughed, splayed his fingers and yelled, “Americaaaaa!” I yelled back, “Americaaaaa!”

We joked about all things white like Van Halen, opera, Lawrence Welk, hockey, the rodeo, paganism, NASCAR, gentrifying whole cities, the Confederate flag. It was fun un-

til I thought of the white kids who yelled “nigger” at me from cars and the hard stares I get when I enter a diner in rural NY. And whites trying to be “down” and the white man who touched my hair until I slapped his hand. And being tokenized in all-white work spaces. I’ve faced closed, white spaces. And in reverse, I was an open playground for their hands and fantasies of “realness.”

And it’s not like I’m a stranger to privilege. I am middle-class, straight, cis-male, light-skinned and able-bodied. My social stats are off the chart. But I’ve never felt safe in my life. My mom taught me to watch for racism, to listen for it in the undertones of what people say. Growing up, I saw racism twist my friends. I didn’t have exact language for it, but I felt a weight. And somehow, whites did not feel it but reacted to me pushing it off. As if my weight was connected to their weightlessness.

Later, I pieced together a “racism radar”: on one end, the Racist White; in the middle, the Colorblind White; and at the other end, the Race Traitor White. It’s not an exact science but a necessary one. The crux was always their privilege, whether they defended it, were oblivious of it or felt guilty about it.

PINK SKINS, WHITE MASKS

If you reversed time and saw cities shrink, roads vanish, people recede from the West Coast to the East, you would arrive at a point in 1619 when colonists waded to the beach. In the beginning of the New World, the white race did not exist.

In the strange mélange of the colonial era, newly enslaved Africans, Native peoples and European immigrants, many of whom were indentured servants, shared the brutal solidarity of hard lives. They wrung life from the land together. They sweated together. They slept together. And they rebelled together.

The turning point was Bacon’s Rebellion in 1676, when European indentured servants and Africans marched to Jamestown and burned the capital down. Terrified of the poor uniting in arms, the ruling class first quashed the rebellion and later instituted privileges for Europeans and restrictions for Africans.

Slowly, white supremacy was built by formal law and informal custom. Africans replaced Europeans as labor. Slave Codes made it illegal for Blacks to gather and to read. Europeans entering North America found a legal and cultural scaffolding around their skin that first made them privileged, then a “white race.”

This process meant coming to see skin color as symbolic. It meant systematizing the sadism in the joy that Frederick Douglass’s slave master took in whipping his aunt. When whites began to project sex and raw freedom on the Black body, it meant contradiction. Which led to fearing contamination by Blackness. Privilege, sadism, projection and fear became the bedrock of white America.

At first, the white race was an exclusive club. No Irish need apply. No Jews. No one south of the Pyrenees. And yet with each crisis, the category of whiteness was expanded. It grew after the draft riots of the Civil War, during which angry mobs, including many Irish, savagely beat Blacks; after World War II, when the G.I. Bill created segregated suburbs; and after the nightmare of the Holocaust was exposed and anti-Semitism finally came to be seen as bigotry.

With each expansion of whiteness there was a conservative counter-reaction, like the 1928 Ku Klux Klan march on Washington, D.C., to protest the Catholics, Jews and Blacks. Each wave of minorities fighting to enter the mainstream was met with bitter opposition by white supremacists. And for a long time, they won.

But decades of political struggle, immigration and cultur-

al mixing created a voter coalition of relatively liberal whites and minorities who in 2008 tipped the balance. But it wasn’t Obama’s “Hope and Change” shtick that created radical interracial solidarity. It was the 2008 financial crash, which plunged a generation of white youth into unemployment and hopelessness, that caused the spirit of Bacon’s rebellion to rise again in the tents of Occupy Wall Street. Until they were beaten raw by police, that is.

After the stomping out of Occupy, one saw a surprising amount of whites in the Black Lives Matter protests. Walking in the thundering river of people, hands raised, chanting, “Hands up! Don’t shoot,” we were amazed. But they had experienced the violence of the state on their bodies and felt a deep empathy.

And that newfound empathy seemed to resonate with an internal contradiction in whiteness. If one of the requirements of becoming “white” in America had been to amputate one’s heritage, then that loss of culture created a vacuum that led to cultural appropriation. White youth, especially in the cities, have taken up Black cultural forms — including jazz, rock and roll and hip-hop — in their rebellion against older generations. Globalization has deepened and widened this practice, so now we see it all over — in the preponderance of yoga, salsa classes and shamanism, to name a few. But in appropriating culture from the Other, one’s measure of “realness” inevitably begins to stem from the Other.

Which is why Dolezal’s passing as Black was such a scandal. Her extreme act made visible what was already happening in popular culture. Contending with broken families, unemployment and precarious futures, a lot of white youth turn to Black art to express their rage, hopelessness and maybe, redemption. And like Dolezal, identifying as Black — however flawed that act may be — allows them to rediscover the most alienated parts of themselves.

WHISTLING DIXIE

“He kind of went over the edge,” Scott Roof, Dylann Roof’s cousin, told *The Intercept*. “When a girl he liked started dating a Black guy.” Afterwards Roof focused on the Trayvon Martin case, projecting his wounded pride onto George Zimmerman and his jealousy onto Martin. He hit on the Council for Conservative Citizens, a white supremacist website, where his revenge fantasy became magnified by the grand narrative of race war. Soon he was taking selfies holding a gun and a Confederate flag. And then one day, Roof walked into a Black church.

“Nigger,” he shouted as he shot. That’s the last word they heard as they lay bleeding to death on the church floor. “Nigger.”

WHITE RULING CLASS ANXIETY

As Roof sat in the South Carolina jail, held in the next cell was killer cop Michael Slager, who on April 4 shot Walter Scott, an unarmed Black man, in the back as he ran away. A cell phone video, taken by bystander Feidin Santana, was given to the victim’s family. They aired it and Slager was fired, arrested and charged with murder. His indictment is evidence of increasing white ruling-class anxiety.

The riots in Ferguson and Baltimore over police killings of unarmed Black men has left politicians afraid. You see it in their raised eyebrows at news conferences. As cities ignite with protest and rioters burn stores and hurl rocks at police, the sense that any urban center can explode is beginning to spread.

Talking with my friend professor Chris Hobson about this era of racial anxiety, he said, “The real example is not Rachel Dolezal, it’s Governor Nikki Haley hugging the Black senator. She is scared of losing control.”

He said that fear was sublimated into liberal pity and sym-



bolism. After the Charleston massacre, a tidal wave of solace moved the nation. And yes, it was real grief at horrific violence, but it was also laced with panic. If the ruling class doesn't show proper outrage, people in the streets could erupt in protest. And if they do, the cops will bring down so much violence that even if the state is left intact, it would be emptied of credibility. "So, liberal sympathy is the fire extinguisher of Black rage," I said. He smiled and said, "Burn it down."

The only thing that can calm rage at injustice is justice. In 1955, the two white men who killed 14-year-old Emmett Till in Mississippi were acquitted by a white jury. Sixty years later, two white men, Roof and Stager, sit in adjacent cells, awaiting trial for killing Black people.

THE NEW WORLD

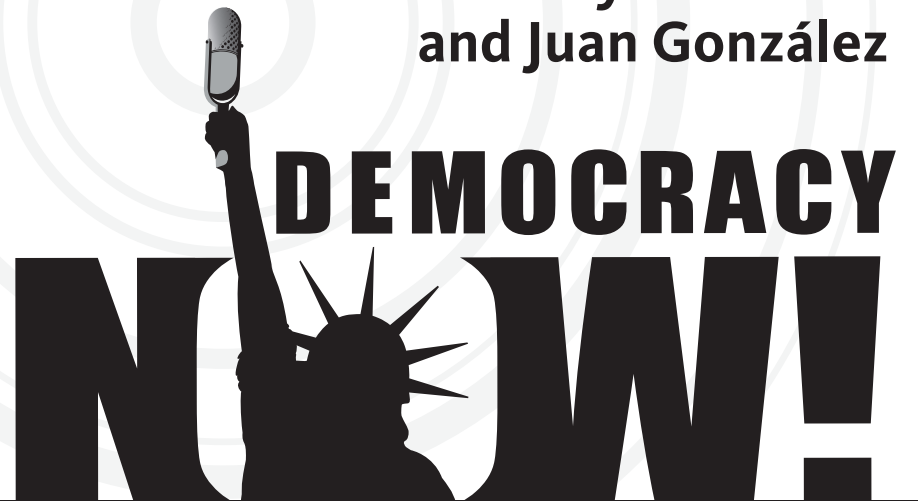
Whiteness is a blinding light. Lit by the early colonialists, it made Europeans visible to each other. Like moths to a flame, generations of Americans were burned by it. Now, after nearly three centuries, that flame is beginning to gutter out.

Rachel Dolezal, Dylann Roof and Michael Stager are signs of the fracturing "white race." Dolezal solved the conflict of being cut off from one's culture by appropriating another. Roof was caught in the backwaters of white supremacy, too young and weak-minded to see that the promise of racial glory was a chimera. And Stager was caught by surprise when he learned that the cop badge is no longer a license to kill.

Each of them represent a fracturing, however glacial, of whiteness. And with each break, we recreate the New World, a landscape of fluid people who share the solidarity of hard lives. If we ever arrive at a post-racial world, it will be one where the scars of racism and classism will be our tribal tattoos, and this time, when we rebel together, we'll win.

MARLENA BUCZEK SMITH

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RAISE THE MINIMUM WAGE NOW

By Ann Toback



Testimony delivered by Ann B. Toback, Executive Director of The Workmen's Circle on Monday, June 15, 2015, to the members of The Fast Food Wage Board:

My name is Ann Toback and I am the executive director of the Workmen's Circle, a progressive Jewish social justice organization founded in 1900 that today connects a growing activist community of Jews of all affiliations with their cultural and social justice heritage.

The Workmen's Circle has been fighting for workers' rights since the turn of the 20th century, when our members helped found the International Ladies Garment Workers Union, the Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America, and many others.

Today we are proud to stand and support a movement founded and organized two-and-a-half years ago by fast food workers in response to their struggle to meet their daily life needs all the while working many hours each week in low-wage jobs.

We want to be clear: \$15 an hour is not a final goal nor a ceiling, but it is a start to addressing the plague of income inequality in New York and in the United States, where over 10 million people fall into the category of working poor. We stand here because it is unconscionable to expect families, single parents with children, young men and women, to be able to live on anything less than \$15 an hour. Living on \$15 an hour in New York would be a challenge for anyone, and right now we are asking wage earners to make do on far less. Workers who put in over 40 hours a week shouldn't have to make choices to purchase food for their families or to pay their utility bills, and that is a choice too many New Yorkers are making today.

Our Jewish tradition prizes justice as a paramount value. A watchword of our people for a millennium — and today — is "Justice, justice, you shall pursue!" For centuries, the Jewish community around the world has accepted the responsibility not only to assist the poor, but also to empower the needy to become self-supportive and to live with dignity. Our historic texts and modern commentaries emphasize the importance of fairness to workers because it is fundamentally the right thing to do.

Additionally, in the Jewish community of New York there are over 560,000 people living at or near the poverty line. That's one in four households in New York City alone. Forty-five percent of all Jewish children in New York City live near or below the poverty level. And over half of these households include one or two full-time working adults. These are horrible numbers to hear, and they alone demand that we take steps to rectify this inequity, though of course we realize that other communities are much harder hit than ours.

THEREFORE:

We welcome the creation of the wage board and we look forward to rapid decisions to address these critical issues.

In closing, we want to be clear: we not only support \$15 an hour, but we urge you to consider the human cost of poverty and not only recommend \$15 an hour, but recommend it to be fully implemented by the end of 2015.

For more information, please contact Ann Toback at AToback@circle.org or by phone at 646-291-8360.



Jewish culture for a just world

THE LIBERAL SOLUTION TO POLICE VIOLENCE

BY STUART SCHRADER

"No justice, no peace," goes the chant.

From Ferguson to Baltimore, widespread protests over police killings of unarmed Black men and women have not only denounced the crimes of individual officers but have called into question the very legitimacy of law enforcement institutions that claim to "serve and protect" the public.

The upsurge in protests against police violence has brought back memories of the urban rebellions of the 1960s, which were frequently ignited by incidents of police brutality in poor, predominantly Black neighborhoods.

In response to the current round of protest, President Barack Obama appointed the Task Force on 21st Century Policing in December 2014 to investigate what was happening and to propose solutions. The 13-member Task Force brought together law enforcement officials, community activists and academics. Yet the Task Force was not designed to lessen police violence, nor to reduce Black people's encounters with the police and entry into the criminal justice system. Instead, like the President's Commission on Law Enforcement and the Administration of Justice and the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders, appointed by President Lyndon Johnson 50 years ago, today's solutions will strengthen police, expand their budgets and insulate them from public criticism.

In the 1960s as much as in 2015, charges of police brutality have never been answered with justice. Instead, the police try to quiet protests with modest procedural changes and new technologies. The United States we live in — the United States of Mike Brown, Tanisha Anderson, Eric Garner, Mya Hall and hundreds more — is the result of these so-called reforms, adopted throughout the past half-century: an unjust system protected by procedurally fair cops.

The Task Force on 21st Century Policing issued its final report in May. The report advocates a range of reforms geared toward a "foundational principle": "Building trust and nurturing legitimacy on both sides of the police/citizen divide."

But why are trust and legitimacy important? Does justice flow from police legitimacy? No. What about the bodily integrity of Black and Brown people or economically exploited folks? No again.

The Task Force is clear that the legitimacy of the badge is aimed at getting people to "obey the law."

People are more likely to comply, the Task Force declares, when they perceive police authority to be legitimate. Police reform, therefore, is designed to make you and I more likely to obey the commands of police because it will

make those commands seem to issue from an institution worthy of respect.

WHY PEOPLE OBEY THE LAW

The Task Force takes the idea that trust in police leads people to obey the law from a Yale scholar named Tom Tyler. His writing is well known and widely cited. But the way the Task Force uses it should give us pause. Tyler has investigated, at the junction of legal theory and psychology, why people obey the law — or don't. In the hands of the Task Force, Tyler's central ideas about trust and legitimacy become menacing. The Task Force is interested in compelling people to obey the law, and it orients all of its inquiries toward that end.

A slate of reforms, it claims, will make the police more efficient and less error-prone. The reforms include requiring standardized curriculum for officer training, using cutting-edge technologies in data collection, adopting body-worn cameras, deploying "less than lethal" weapons, making cops interact with "community residents" regularly and more. Many of these and other new recommenda-

IN THE HANDS OF REFORMERS, IDEAS ABOUT TRUST AND LEGITIMACY BECOME MENACING.

tions to increase diversity of police forces and raise education standards, including through loan-forgiveness, revive ideas first proposed 50 years ago. As the Princeton scholar Naomi Murakawa has shown, this tendency to reform procedures is at the core of the long history of liberal thinking on improving criminal justice. Such reforms are designed to increase the legitimacy of the police.

But they will also make the police's powers more extensive. By creating consummate professionals, reform makes police less susceptible to scrutiny by citizens, elected officials and social movements. It wards off demands for democratic, civilian oversight. Police forces accountable only to their own expert guidelines: that is legitimacy in a nutshell.

In New York City, the police department has diversified by every measure over the past 50 years. Yet the identity of individual officers does not change how patrols operate. Training and tactics dictate police activities. Further, although crime rates remain low in New York City, elected officials jockey for position ahead of the next election by calling for a boost in the number of cops on the streets, in the name of



JOSE CARMONA

increasing “collaborative” police interactions with the city’s communities. Officials describe such interactions as conversations meant to build trust. Critics see them as intelligence gathering on already vulnerable city residents behind a smile and a handshake.

The Task Force recognizes that not all Americans trust police equally. Based on a national survey the Pew Research Center conducted soon after Mike Brown’s killing in Ferguson, Missouri, there are sharp racial disparities in perceptions of police legitimacy. For every question, white people overwhelmingly had a more favorable view of police, with sometimes double the level of confidence of Black people.

The Task Force cites this research. Yet it cannot ask what the roots of this lack of legitimacy among Black and Hispanic people might be, because its guiding principle is to increase legitimacy across the board, not to investigate racism underlying the system that police power maintains.

The very idea of procedural justice, which is so important to the Task Force, rules out investigation of the overall system’s patterns, how the police enforce and reinforce large-scale inequitable relationships like class, race and gender. Instead, procedural justice is based on the belief that outcomes will necessarily be fair if the individual processes that add up to the outcomes are fair. You may ask yourself, after interacting with a cop, whether you were treated politely. If so, the Task Force would judge it a success. You may not ask, for instance, whether this interaction was the result of police deployment to enforce quality-of-life prohibitions in a rapidly gentrifying neighborhood.

Procedural fixes among police are aimed at your compliance with the system they protect and serve.

BODY CAMERAS

Body-worn cameras are a perfect example. As a result of prior efforts, combined with the Task Force’s recommendations, police in the United States will begin using the cameras more widely. The Task Force argues that to have cameras recording interactions between police and citizens will cause a clear result: “everyone behaves better.”

But, as Shahid Buttar of the Bill of Rights Defense Committee has argued, these cameras individualize interactions

and sever them from the sociopolitical context in which the interactions occur. Individually, a stop may proceed fairly, but it is a mere slice of social reality. The camera can never capture broader patterns. Worse, what the camera captures can be used against defendants or even bystanders caught in its gaze. As if Americans aren’t already surveilled enough.

Body-worn cameras also exemplify how superficial reforms will strengthen the police by summoning budget increases. Already, as the technology’s introduction has begun, police executives are complaining that they are swamped with too much data. Every interaction is supposed to get recorded, but to be useful the recordings need to be easily identified, cross-referenced and viewed. The cameras themselves are not the expensive part. Hiring staff to index, manage, store and safeguard the data becomes pricey, chiefs claim. Luckily for cash-strapped municipalities, the Department of Justice has recently opened its wallet, to the tune of \$20 million, part of \$75 million Obama requested in December. And no amount of money guarantees that an officer presses record before pulling his or her pistol.

The result of digital advances that also enable our smartphones, body-worn cameras are only the latest technological quick-fix police professionals have devised. For decades, the talisman of the technical solution to a set of interlinked political problems has been irresistible for police reformers. And the companies behind these fixes earn a lot of money.

“LESS THAN LETHAL”

Obama’s Task Force replicates the commissions of the 1960s with its reliance on “less than lethal” weapons to defuse tensions between police and the policed. After cops and National Guardsmen killed and injured scores during unrest in cities and towns throughout the 1960s by shooting their guns wildly into crowds and at buildings, the federal government began recommending CS tear gas, a chemical weapon, instead of guns to disperse boisterous crowds — crowds that had, in many cases, gathered to protest prior incidents of police brutality. In 1968, new expert guidance recognized how shooting guns at crowds made the police seem even more illegitimate. CS, which had been tested widely in South

Continued on page 10

IRAN **War or Peace?**

The U.S. and five other countries are about to conclude an agreement with Iran that will settle differences over Iran’s nuclear energy programs.

The agreement will go a long way toward normalizing relations with Iran and establish a regimen of inspection that will be signed by Iran, the United States and five other countries. If the agreement is undermined by hawks in Congress, including our own Senator Charles Schumer, there will be no inspections, Iran will be unrestricted, our country’s reputation with its partners will be tarnished and military action and a possible new war in the Mid-East brought much closer.

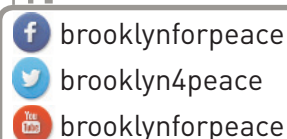
If successful, the agreement will help calm the Middle East, a region that is boiling with crisis.

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**Ask them to support the President
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**Erika Guevara Rosas
Americas Director
Amnesty International
30 July 2014**

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SPAIN'S DEMOCRATIC UPRISING

PHOTOGRAPHY BY ROBERT PLUMA

In Spain, the government's economic austerity policies have contributed to an unemployment rate of 23 percent, mass home foreclosures and evictions and a deep distrust of an entrenched political class. It has also inspired the rise of a new generation of leftist politicians who are shaking up Spain's political landscape.

Their message, focusing on ending austerity and creating a culture of participatory democracy, has struck a deep chord. On May 24, a cohort of activists-turned-politicians were swept into power in Spain's largest cities, including Madrid and Barcelona. In the words of Ada Colau, the anti-eviction activist who on June 13 took office as Barcelona's new

mayor, "This was the victory of David over Goliath."

The success of Colau and others like her is driven by their deep ties to grassroots movements that have emerged since the 2008 financial crash and subsequent bank bailouts. In Spain's general elections in November, David may once again triumph. Podemos, the upstart anti-austerity party backing many of the municipal victors, is running strong in the polls, presenting a serious challenge not only to the two-party system dominant in Spain, but also to the economic policies of the European Union.

This is what the run-up to the May 24 elections in Madrid and Barcelona looked like.

UNCERTAIN FUTURE: A young couple sits in repose outside of La Tabacalera, a collectively-managed social center in Madrid. Youth unemployment in Spain has recently been as high as 50 percent.



WORD ON THE STREET: Podemos ("we can") painted on a street fixture in Madrid. Podemos is an upstart anti-austerity electoral party that has been on the rise in Spain. Ahead of national elections in November, it is polling evenly with the two parties that have dominated Spanish electoral politics for decades.

CELEBRATION: Supporters of Barcelona en Comú celebrate victory as the platform wins the mayor's office and takes 11 of 41 seats on the Barcelona City Council.



SYSTEM FAIL: An ad in a Madrid metro station for Esperanza Aguirre, mayoral candidate for the ruling conservative Partido Popular (Popular Party), with the word *robar* ("to steal") scrawled on it. Spaniards have been increasingly fed up with government corruption, and Aguirre lost the election to Manuela Carmena, a retired judge with a history of opposition to the military regime that ruled Spain from 1939-1978.



FROM OUTSIDER TO INSIDER: Ada Colau, a founder of the PAH and leader of municipal electoral platform Barcelona en Comú, delivers her victory speech as the new mayor-elect of Barcelona.



THIS WON'T BE EASY: Representatives of Podemos Madrid describe their hopes and concerns about the ability of Podemos to bring lasting change in the fight against austerity.



ANTICIPATION: Supporters gathered at the headquarters of Barcelona en Comú await election results on May 24.

THE RIGHT TO HOUSING: Members of the Barcelona chapter of the PAH (Platform of People Affected by Mortgages) hold a meeting in which they assist local residents with issues related to housing, mortgages and eviction.



GETTING ORGANIZED: A flowchart depicting the organizational network of Patio Maravillas, a social movement center in Madrid.



STAY TUNED: A violin player leads a band during a rally celebrating the anniversary of 15M, the youth-led anti-austerity movement that took over public squares throughout Spain on May 15th, 2011. 15M was also a key source of advice and inspiration for Occupy Wall Street when it began in Sept. 2011.

Robert Pluma participated in a delegation of U.S. activists to Spain in advance of the May elections. For more info, see nycotospain.com.

WHY THE U.S. IS PIVOTING TO ASIA

INTERVIEW BY JOHN TARLETON

The Obama administration has labored since 2009 to negotiate the Trans-Pacific Partnership, a massive free trade agreement with 11 other Pacific Rim nations. The President insists TPP will not repeat past trade deals that led to hundreds of thousands of good jobs leaving the United States for low-wage nations. Yet with more than 500 corporate lobbyists advising U.S. negotiators as talks continue behind closed doors, concerns abound among labor, environmental and consumer advocates.

The TPP's U.S. opponents will be going all out to derail the deal when it's expected to come before Congress sometime later this year. To better understand the meaning of the TPP and how it looks from the other side of the Pacific Ocean, The Independent spoke with Walden Bello, author of numerous books on corporate globalization and its discontents and co-founder of the Bangkok, Thailand-based think tank Focus on the Global South.

JOHN TARLETON: Why does the U.S. government want the TPP so badly?

WALDEN BELLO: It's an effort by a superpower that feels threatened and seeks to contain China. There has been a tremendous economic crisis since 2008 and the United States has not come out of it. Meanwhile China has surpassed the United States as the world's largest economy, according to World Bank figures. So this is an attempt by the United States to shore up its position with the 11 other TPP countries to bring down investment and regulatory barriers so that transnational corporations, primarily U.S. ones, will be able to solidify their hold within these countries. This is happening in tandem with a "pivot to Asia" that has seen the U.S. strategically deploy its military forces to surround China.

What do you find most objectionable about the TPP?

The TPP is not really about trade. It's a really big push to deepen and solidify U.S. corporate control over every sphere of life. For people in the United States, the greatest concern is that the TPP will promote the export of jobs and will have a very negative impact on the environment because cor-

porations as much as possible will try to weaken environmental laws in all of these countries.

On our side of the Pacific, the great concern is that our governments are going to lose their power because Investor State Dispute Settlement (ISDS) mechanisms will give corporations the right to sue states that interfere with their push for profitability. These cases would be heard in secret tribunals staffed by corporate lawyers that will have the power under the TPP to overrule national laws. There is also a push for very strict intellectual property rights that will have a major impact on public health, because they're going to be very tight restrictions on the use of generics that would be cheaper, including life-saving medications for people who have HIV-AIDS.

Why are national governments willing to relinquish their ability to regulate their economy in their own nation's interest? It's unusual for governments to give up power that they hold.

Many of these governments that are part of the TPP process have conservative officials who think the best government is minimum government and that regulation stands in the way of prosperity. It's an ideology many of these technocrats learned while being educated at U.S. institutions.

So technocrats are blinkered by neoliberal ideology. But at the same time, large transnational corporations are desperate for this. How should we understand the TPP as flowing out of the logic of capitalism?

There's a worry on the part of corporations that government regulation will cut into their profitability. The TPP is an attempt to foreclose that possibility. Capital has a very strong sense of what its class interests are and is moving heaven and earth to win passage for this agreement.

The crisis faced by capital at this point, however, is much bigger than a problem of regulation. It is experiencing a crisis of accumulation or overproduction, and it is this that is responsible for lowering the rate of profit. Globalization, deregulation and financialization were efforts put in motion to escape this depressive tendency from the 1980s on, but they have been unsuccessful, and so too will the TPP. In this sense, salvation through TPP is another of capitalism's "grand illusions."

The TPP's chances of making it through the U.S.

Congress in 2015 increased in June when the House and Senate approved Fast Track, which means the TPP will likely be coming up for a simple yes/no vote in Congress later this year.

One has to admit that things are currently not going our way. The important thing at this point in time is mobilization of the public and the electorate. The fight over TPP has increased the level of anti-neoliberal consciousness in the United States, making "trade" a very politicized issue that cuts across some of the usual partisan boundaries. All sorts of possible alliances could emerge once the final treaty is brought back to Congress for a vote and we are finally able to see what's in it. As Yogi Berra put it, "it ain't over till it's over."

What do you see as the alternative to corporate trade deals like NAFTA and TPP?

The important thing is not to move away from trade but to make trade and investment rules subordinate to society, to benefit people instead of corporations. The Bolivarian Alternative for the Americas (ALBA) is a valuable example, though it needs to be reinvigorated. It has brought together Venezuela, Bolivia, Ecuador, Cuba, Nicaragua as well as several Caribbean island nations in a network of people-centered trade, economic cooperation and investment relations that respect the autonomy of countries while trying to maximize benefits for all parties. Given that it's a pioneering effort, ALBA has encountered its share of problems. Still, it represents an alternative path of global economic cooperation, away from corporate-driven free trade.

For more on the TPP, see citizen.org/tpp and flushthetpp.org.

AUTHOR AND ACTIVIST:
Walden Bello.

ONEWORLD.AT

POLICE

Continued from page 7

Vietnam, came to be deployed in many U.S. cities, including with some of the same delivery systems soldiers in Southeast Asia were using.

During the unrest in Newark, New Jersey, in 1967, the National Guard fired over 10,000 bullets. Less than a year later, almost 40,000 Army and National Guard soldiers suppressed unrest nationally in April 1968 following the assassination of

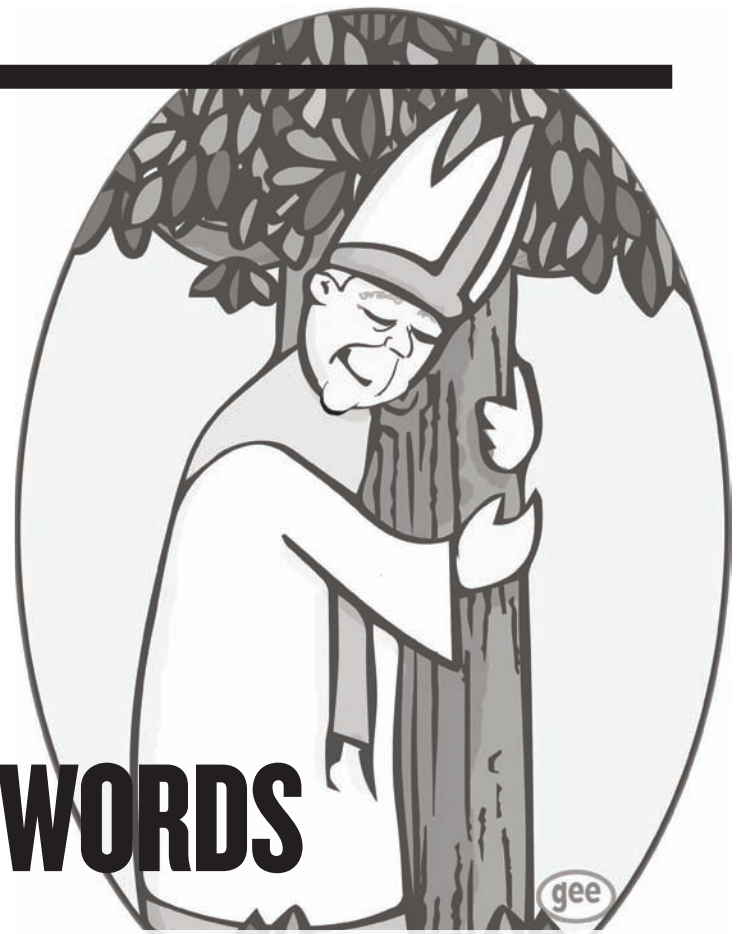
Martin Luther King. They fired only 16 bullets, but used nearly 6,000 CS grenades. This shift was a procedural victory, and it soon trickled down to municipal police. The new "less than lethal" technology represented reform then. Today, protesters and bystanders are choking on it.

Once we recognize how such reforms have ushered in the present, we will be prepared to see through the rhetoric about trust and legitimacy. We will understand that what the police and their appointed reformers desire is simple: compliance.

We demanded justice in the streets. The response was an order to obey. When we ask why, the answer is: trust us.

The history of police reform teaches us that making the police more legitimate means making them more powerful. And that power will bring no justice — and no peace.

Stuart Schrader is a postdoctoral fellow in Global American Studies at Harvard University. He is working on a book about the relationship between U.S. empire and the policing of American streets during the Cold War.



GARY MARTIN

THE GREEN POPE IN HIS OWN WORDS

COMPILED BY GAN GOLAN

Pope Francis has released his long-awaited encyclical on climate change, entitled “Laudato Si’: On Care for Our Common Home.” The 183-page “teaching letter” is vast in its scope, declares climate change a moral issue and covers a broad range of global crises, from the destruction of biodiversity to the unacceptable treatment of the poor, immigrants and climate refugees.

Most scathingly, the paper offers an uncompromising indictment of free markets, accusing capitalism of plundering the planet, driving global inequality and serving only the “very few” that have obstructed desperately needed action on climate change. It urges humanity to begin phasing out fossil fuels “without delay.” At moments, the unapologetic yet meticulously researched paper reads like it could have been written by a cross between St. Francis of Assisi and Naomi Klein.

While many would argue that the Vatican has been on the wrong side of history for, well, most of history, this Pope feels like a refreshing departure, and as a result has become an incredibly popular figure for both Catholics and non-Catholics alike. The Pope, who studied chemistry in his younger days, is said to have spent more than two years working on the encyclical in conversation with climate scientists.

The document, which will determine religious teachings across the 1.2-billion-member Catholic Church — and have impacts well beyond it — has enraged religious conservatives who form the base of the climate denier movement. Curiously, their usual calls to unquestioningly follow religious authority seem to be absent.

At nearly 200 pages however, this thing is a doozy. So, to help you get to the heart of it, here are some of the most intriguing quotes from the encyclical, re-arranged by subject.

ON THE SUBJECT OF THE EARTH:

“The climate is a common good, belonging to all and meant for all.”

ON THE DESTRUCTION OF NATURE:

“Never have we so hurt and mistreated our common home as we have in the last two hundred years.”

ON THE SCIENCE OF CLIMATE CHANGE:

“A number of scientific studies indicate that most global warming in recent decades is due to the great concentration of greenhouse gases (carbon dioxide, methane, nitrogen oxides and others) released mainly as a result of human activity.”

ON FUTURE GENERATIONS:

“Intergenerational solidarity is not optional, but rather a basic question of justice, since the world we have received also belongs to those who will follow us.”

ON CLIMATE DENIERS:

“The failure of global summits on the environment make it plain that our politics are subject to technology and finance. There are too many special interests, and economic interests easily end up trumping the common good and manipulating information so that their own plans will not be affected.”

ON THE LINK BETWEEN CLIMATE AND SOCIAL JUSTICE:

“We are faced not with two separate crises, one environmental and the other social, but rather with one complex crisis that is both social and environmental. Strategies for a solution demand an integrated approach to combating poverty, restoring dignity to the excluded, and at the same time protecting nature.”

ON THE NEED FOR DEEP, STRUCTURAL CHANGE:

“All of this shows the urgent need for us to move forward in a bold cultural revolution.”

“Ecological culture cannot be reduced to a series of urgent and partial responses to the immediate problems of pollution, environmental decay and the depletion of natural resources. There needs to be a distinctive way of looking at things, a way of thinking, policies, an educational program, a lifestyle and a spirituality that together generate resistance to the assault of the technocratic paradigm. Otherwise, even the best ecological initiatives can find themselves caught up in the same globalized logic. To seek only a technical remedy to each environmental problem that comes up is to separate what is in reality interconnected and to mask the true and deepest problems of the global system.”

ON THE NEED TO END USE OF FOSSIL FUELS:

“There is an urgent need to develop policies so that, in the next few years, the emission of carbon dioxide and other highly polluting gases can be drastically reduced, for example, substituting for fossil fuels and developing sources of renewable energy.”

ON THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE WEALTHIEST COUNTRIES:

“The countries that have benefited from a high degree of industrialization, at the cost of enormous emissions of greenhouse gases, have a greater responsibility for providing a solution to the problems they have caused.”

ON IMMIGRATION AND REFUGEES:

“We need to strengthen the conviction that we are one single human family. There are no frontiers or barriers, political or social, behind which we can hide, still less is there room for the globalization of indifference.”

ON CAPITALISM AND THE FREE MARKET:

“We need to reject a magical conception of the market, which would suggest that problems can be solved simply by

an increase in the profits of companies or individuals.”

“We can see signs that things are now reaching a breaking point, due to the rapid pace of change and degradation; these are evident in large-scale natural disasters as well as social and even financial crises, for the world’s problems cannot be analyzed or explained in isolation.”

ON MARKET-BASED SOLUTIONS:

“Environmental protection cannot be assured solely on the basis of financial calculations of costs and benefits. The environment is one of those goods that cannot be adequately safeguarded or promoted by market forces.”

ON PRIVATE PROPERTY:

“There is always a social mortgage on all private property, in order that goods may serve the general purpose ... it is not in accord with God’s plan that this gift be used in such a way that its benefits favor only a few ... This calls into serious question the unjust habits of a part of humanity.”

ON UNLIMITED GROWTH:

“Unlimited growth, which proves so attractive to economists, financiers and experts in technology ... is based on the lie that there is an infinite supply of the earth’s goods, and this leads to the planet being squeezed dry beyond every limit.”

ON CLIMATE ACTIVISM:

“In the absence of pressure from the public and from civic institutions, political authorities will always be reluctant to intervene, all the more when urgent needs must be met.”

ON FAILED POLITICAL LEADERSHIP:

“What would induce anyone, at this stage, to hold on to power only to be remembered for their inability to take action when it was urgent and necessary to do so?”

IT TAKES EVERYONE:

“Self-improvement on the part of individuals will not by itself remedy the extremely complex situation facing our world today ... Social problems must be addressed by community networks and not simply by the sum of individual good deeds.”

ON THE FUTURE:

“Many things have to change course, but it is we human beings above all who need to change. We lack an awareness of our common origin, of our mutual belonging and of a future to be shared with everyone. This basic awareness would enable the development of new convictions, attitudes and forms of life. A great cultural, spiritual and educational challenge stands before us, and it will demand that we set out on the long path of renewal.”

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BOOKS

EXPLAINING ISIS

The Rise of Islamic State: ISIS and the New Sunni Revolt

By PATRICK COCKBURN
VERSO BOOKS, 2015

By Bradley Williams

There is a Syrian joke about the people from the city of Homs, which represents the middle of Syria, the overlap of urban and rural, east and west, north and south. People from Homs are considered to be simpletons, caught between Damascus, the political and diplomatic capital of Syria, and Aleppo, the industrial and agricultural center. The joke goes that a Homs man is attending a soccer match. During the game people start whispering under their breath that the first goal is about to be scored and, *voilà*, the first goal. Later, people start whispering that the second goal is coming, and lo and behold: the second goal is scored. The Homs man stands up and says, “Guys, guys — whoever here has already seen the match, please don’t ruin the ending.”

Patrick Cockburn’s *The Rise of Islamic State: ISIS and the New Sunni Revolt* was originally published in 2014 under the title *The Jihadist Return*; with events in Syria and Iraq developing rapidly, Cockburn has now updated it to include the events of summer 2014, which saw the Iraqi city of Mosul fall to ISIS. There is no shortage of writers trying to plant their flag in the fertile political soil of the Syrian and Iraqi wars, and a spate of books has been published in the last year about the rise of ISIS and the threat it poses to the Middle East and possibly to the world at large. Most of these books emerge from a place of deep Islamophobia and a misunderstanding of the region and its inhabitants, and form an attempt at legitimizing foreign intervention and empire.

Patrick Cockburn, on the other hand, has long had a reputation for challenging the West’s stranglehold over the region, particularly in Iraq. Cockburn’s book seeks to fill

a void in the existing literature that criticizes ISIS’s barbarism but doesn’t address the role of U.S. geopolitical maneuvering in the region and its complicity with the agendas of allies such as Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Turkey. When he is at his best, Cockburn deftly skewers these countries for their roles in backing ISIS and other anti-Shi’ite jihadists in Iraq and Syria.

Cockburn’s book, unfortunately, reads as a collection of longform articles rather than as a cohesive and coherent body of work on the self-proclaimed Islamic State. He accomplishes the almost impossible task of tracing the rise of ISIS with modest success, focusing primarily on Iraq and Nouri al-Maliki’s role in failing to prevent and ultimately contributing to the group’s advance. Cockburn tracks ISIS’s beginnings to the rise of Al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI) under Jordanian terrorist Abu Musab al-Zarqawi in the mid-’00s, during a period marked by Maliki’s increasing grip on power and the country’s swift descent into chaos.

Cockburn also looks further back, identifying how the U.S.-led destabilization of Iraq and the dissolution of the country’s army and political structures prefigured the swell in ISIS’s ranks. The Sunni conscripts of Saddam Hussein’s Ba’athist army, after having been laid off permanently from their jobs as soldiers, formed a new underclass after the U.S.-led invasion. “Under Maliki’s Shia-dominated government, patronage based on party, family, or community determines who gets a job, contributing further to the political and economic marginalization of Iraq’s Sunni population that began after the fall of Saddam Hussein,” Cockburn writes. Following the dissolution of the army, its trained Sunni fighters had no means of subsistence and turned to survive on armed jihad, funded by Saudi Arabia and its regional partners.

Cockburn’s nuanced reading of Iraqi affairs wears a bit thin on Syria. He describes the Syrian uprising as a revolution that was “hijacked” by

Islamist extremists, which allowed for AQI to expand to Syria. But though he (correctly) pulls Nouri al-Maliki to pieces, Cockburn’s stance against foreign intervention and Western hegemony in the region makes him hesitant to criticize Bashar al-Assad. While the dominant groups in Syria are indeed hardline takfiri Islamists who have slaughtered minorities for their faith and children for blasphemy, it is still the Assad regime that controls Syrian airspace, with an army of hundreds of thousands of troops and heavy weaponry. However stretched that army may be, it has mostly focused on fighting other militias in Syria while allowing ISIS to expand.

So, who’s already seen the match and knows the ending? In May, the Syrian city of Palmyra and the Iraqi city of Ramadi fell to ISIS control with little resistance from the Syrian and Iraqi armies and while U.S.-led coalition aircraft were nowhere in sight. Each city lies within 100 miles of the capitals of Damascus and Baghdad. Meanwhile, the Iraqi army barely resembles a fighting force and Assad would never negotiate the terms of his departure — not that there are any “better” actors on the ground to replace him even if he did. The current situation, as Cockburn notes, closely resembles the Thirty Years’ War in 17th-century Europe: each fighting faction is unwilling to make concessions necessary for peace to be brokered. Meanwhile, the goals continue to be scored, with mounting civilian deaths and no end to the game in sight.



ISIS VIDEO STILL

ISLAMIC STATE: ISIS fighters sweep across northern Iraq in June 2014. A new book by veteran Middle East correspondent Patrick Cockburn explores the group’s complex origins.



WHY HATERS GONNA HATE

The Bigot: Why Prejudice Persists
BY STEPHEN ERIC BRONNER
YALE UNIVERSITY PRESS, 2014

By Michael Hirsch

Last year in Florida, following a federal court's overturning the state law banning same-sex marriage, footage aired on MSNBC of protesters demanding that the odious law be restored. One clip showed a dorky Walter Mitty type getting up in the face of a gay Florida couple filing marriage papers. "Two men and two women can't marry. It's perversion," he shouted. "Don't you understand that it's perversion?"

Here in New York, more than a few of our neighbors have been willing to blame Eric Garner for his death-by-cops, allegedly deserved because he was selling loosies on a Staten Island street corner and put his hands in the air when cops sought to arrest him. In letters to the editor of the *Daily News*, usually the less rancid of the city's two tabloids, there was a clear subtext that New York is full of lesser breeds whose control is the police's job, no questions asked. Some letter writers weren't even subtle, saying that "they" can't control themselves or their kids, and that New York's Finest needed respect, not second-guessing about officers' proclivities for murder.

Where does this animus toward "the other" come from?

In *The Bigot: Why Prejudice Persists*, Rutgers University political theorist Stephen Eric Bronner displays a keen understanding of the aggrieved if damaging psychology of the subjects of his book.

For Bronner, the bigot's style "is not a derivative matter, but is instead part of his character. The bigot senses that modernity is undermining his belief system and his ability to make sense of himself ... The bigot always directs his hatred against those who threaten (or might threaten) his privileges, his existential worth and the (imaginary) world in which he was once at home ... Once the beneficiary of social privilege, the bigot now views himself as a loser ... it is always about him and never about his victims."

So bigotry for Bronner has less to do with philosophy or a studied point of view and more to do with anger

at "them" getting something "they" don't deserve because "they," well, they ain't "us" and "why don't we benefit more?" Anything that smacks of redistribution, especially to people of color and even low-income whites, is proscribed.

Bronner's emphasis on "privileges" and "victims" reveals both the book's enormous strengths and some weakness. Its strengths lie in looking for a concrete explanation for bigotry that goes beyond bad attitudes of rotten people to suggest that benefits are derived from racial, ethnic and gender oppression. Its key weakness: the text doesn't distinguish between actual privileges, which mostly relate to class, and ascribed privileges, which are social and may be no less detrimental ideologically and culturally but lie in what Marxists name "false consciousness." There's a relationship there — one of course informs the other, but they are not the same.

From the days of Ronald Reagan, the past 35 years have shown that a Republican program fits a bigot's needs. However, a "blame the other, but never the rich" framework is not peculiar to the United States. Far-right nationalist and even openly fascist parties are growing throughout Europe, largely over opposition to immigrants, even as sweeping austerity policies have been key to damaging the well-being of millions of working people and no palpable inconvenience has been caused by migrant labor.

Instead of massing against capital and its political enablers, go blame the outsider for the lack of jobs and a perceived degrading of national culture. The racist siren song doesn't have to deliver, but the left parties do. Since many of these have ceased to provide any sort of credible opposition to a deregulated free-market capitalism, it's little wonder that, purely for opportunistic reasons, French Socialists and the British Labor Party are borrowing from the right's hymnbook, echoing right-wing noises about unassimilated immigrants running amok.

Defining bigots politically as those who are often the least able to ward off the effects of economic crisis and are susceptible to blaming the narrowing of their own life chances on a despised other explains much about why the strategy has legs. As Bronner

Continued on page 15

BETH WHITNEY

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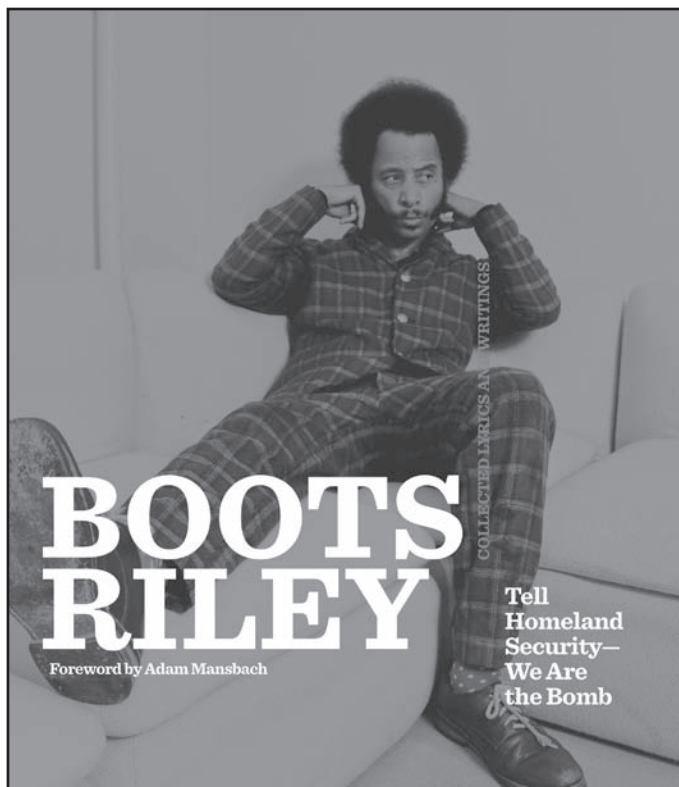
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“His lyrics, musings, and memories reveal a brother at home in the world; no struggle or corner of the globe goes unthought, unsung, or unmoored from its mythical veneer. No mere compendium of rhymes, *Boots Riley: Tell Homeland Security—We Are the Bomb* is his *Red Book*—at once a manifesto, a work of art, an archeology of knowledge, a genealogy of revolutionary funk, and a window onto a world of injustice and joy, pain, and possibility. Dig it!”

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MUSIC

AWESOME AMIGOS

The Amigos
ROCKWOOD MUSIC HALL

By David Meadow

A good ol’ boy, a jazz drummer, an Ivy Leaguer and an ethnomusicologist all walk into a bar. They get on stage, and before you know it, they’re playing a frantic square dance and calling the moves, seemingly exhorting you to allemande left and swing your partner. And then they stop abruptly and head into a full-length song.

The magnificent Americana quartet the Amigos were in residence at the Rockwood Music Hall in June, and I was lucky enough to catch the opening night on June 8. The band members bend their prodigious musical acumen to the task of interweaving folk, country, Mexican ranchero music, Cajun/zydeco and 1920s hot jazz, and the results are delightful. With zest, panache and no little ethnomusicological wit, the Amigos make the disparate strands of accordion music into a coherent whole, and I say “accordion music” here without snark or ironic distance: This group manifests a love for, and a fun-loving seriousness about, a large number of American and neighboring traditions that feature accordion prominently. Almost any given song is syncretic, and I’m sure we can find purists in each of the traditions represented — or maybe even in sub-traditions of those traditions — to wring their hands about the bowdlerization of The Tradition. No matter. Frankly, when you have this level of technique and are this engaging, you’ve pretty much earned the right not to care what those people think.

“This level” is no joke, either. One member or another has collaborated at some point with Pete Seeger, Joe Lovano, David Grisman and Ravi Coltrane, and the quartet has traveled together as cultural ambassadors for the State Department. It’s notable that such seasoned musicians, who clearly have the chops to shred copiously in long jams, opt mostly for steady, sturdy ensemble playing to showcase the beautiful variegations of all the traditions they draw upon. Guitarist Justin Poindexter, who didn’t take many extended solos, nevertheless played that night with such a compelling, deeply internalized habitation to the country idiom(s) he honed in Nashville and his native North Carolina, that even his few notes of noodling between songs dripped with countryness. A music teacher probably couldn’t explain in theory terms why it was “country”; it just was. This night

was the accordion’s night to shine, and Poindexter complemented it beautifully, always supporting and never bumping into it.

As for accordionist Sam Reider, he maintained a great command of the instrument that his occasionally fulsome mugging and swooning might not let on. In one exhibition piece, he dealt out some dizzying runs in the fast-picking bluegrass vein. It was clean, articulate, matter-of-fact, utterly self-assured and over all too quickly.

I’m pretty sure Reider is the cutup in this band, and that it was his idea to do the square-dancing bit and the surprise cover of Green Day’s paean to teenage angst, “Basket Case.” None of this feels forced or embarrassing; it’s all of a piece with the cheeky whimsy of ecumenical song selection and repurposing.

I knew percussionist Will Clark for a jazzier the minute I saw his vintage A. Zildjian cymbals. Unfortunately for my jazz geekery, but fortunately for the wider mission of the band, he kept it subtle with almost-subliminal variations — alternately playing a steady funk beat with the classic ride-cymbal bell accents on the off-beat eighth notes, pairing stick and brush for a nice thick loping texture on a ballad and taking both hands to the snare for a quick country shuffle. Bass player Noah Garabedian, meanwhile, was right at home thrumming the upright. Though the spotlight was rarely on him, he showed stamina and poise, and passing the true test of a Bassist Who Both Swings and Rocks, maneuvered his massive strings nimbly enough to sound like an electric on the rocking tunes.

Over the course of the set, the band covered a lot of ground, hitting trad-anon classics like “Wayfaring Stranger” and “California Blues,” and then meandering into a nearly-pure country rocker in the Townes Van Zandt vein, wistful and defiant. Here Poindexter and Reiter showcased their wonderful vocal blend, with the harmonies fitted closely to that idiom. The last song was beautiful and earnest, in the right way — and then they were back to the square-dancing routine for the last notes they played on stage. The routine worked well to book-end the set: it was zany and uncompromising, and reaffirmed what was already clear — that the band has an expansive, simultaneously reverent and irreverent vision, and by all standards, stays true to it.

The Amigos will be playing at the Clason Social Club in Brooklyn on July 10 and at Joe’s Pub on August 12. For more, see theamigosband.com.

INSTRUMENTAL KNOWLEDGE: The Amigos weave many musical traditions into their performances.



DAVID MEADOW

WHEN TV WAS DARING AND RADICAL, SORT OF

Revolution of the Eye: Modern Art and the Birth of American Television
THE JEWISH MUSEUM
THROUGH SEPTEMBER 27

By Mike Newton

I don't own a television. Of course, that doesn't mean I don't watch TV: I just use the Internet instead. TV viewing remains an almost absurdly popular activity — according to ratings company Nielsen, the average American watches a staggering five hours of live TV every day — but more and more, the big TV networks are being forced to cede space to online streaming services. TV-as-abstract-medium isn't going anywhere, but broadcast television — that ever-present force, steadily humming along 24 hours a day with reruns, infomercials and urgent news breaks, beamed out by a clutch of all-powerful networks — is starting to shed some of its seemingly boundless cultural influence.

I threw out my television in part because I got sick of it. Like many of us who watch TV almost exclusively online, I stopped seeing much reason to deal with the annoyances and inanities of broadcast: the long ad breaks, the joyless waiting for something good to come on, the entrenched conservatism, the sense that — to quote metatextual TV character Jack Donaghy — most TV shows are just there “to fill time between car commercials.” TV is the most passive of passive entertainments; setting aside a handful of exceptional programs, TV, at its best, is a fun way to kill some hours and, at its worst, a vessel for some of the most reactionary and manipulative messaging that corporate

capitalism has to offer.

But what if I'm wrong? What if all along, TV was actually sneaking radical, progressive messages into peoples' living rooms? That's the oddly revisionist take of “Revolution of the Eye: Modern Art and the Birth of American Television,” on view at the Jewish Museum. The show posits that throughout the 1950s and into the '70s, American TV took major cues from modern intellectual culture, introducing ordinary viewers to the shock of new art.

One of the exhibition's shining examples is “The Twilight Zone.” “Twilight Zone” is famous for its sharp, twisty writing, its lovely cinematography and its earnest, if sometimes preachy, liberal politics. But “Revolution of the Eye” goes deeper, pointing out that the show drew heavily from progressive, avant-garde art movements like surrealism and expressionist film. Elsewhere in the exhibition we get ephemera from “Winky Dink and You,” a popular mid-1950s Saturday morning cartoon that fought against television's natural passivity by encouraging children to make art on their TVs with a “magic drawing screen” (a big piece of transparent vinyl); among the show's crew was legendary experimental filmmaker Stan VanDerBeek.

The exhibition also spends time with Ernie Kovacs, whose madcap, inventive comedy style is presented as a sort of prime time Dadaism. And then there's the classic late-1960s “Batman,” with its bright colors and zippy graphics making clear nods to the pop-art stylings of Andy Warhol and Roy Lichtenstein (in one episode, the Joker becomes a famous artist when his acts of destructive nihilism get taken as genius high-art experiments).

But, to what extent can radical

ideas remain radical after they've filtered down into or been co-opted by the mainstream? “Batman” may have dipped into the visual litany of pop art, but pop art was supposed to be a critical reflection on the perils of American consumer culture; “Batman” was trying to get kids to buy action figures. The exhibition compares Bonnie MacLean's trippy 1960s rock-and-roll posters with the look of hit NBC variety show “Rowan and Martin's Laugh-In,” but while MacLean's art emerged from a genuine creative subculture, “Laugh-In” used psychedelic aesthetics as window-dressing for goofy jokes and cute, dancing hippie girls. Even the name was a co-optation of something radical: “Laugh-In” being the harmless version of a “sit-in” or “teach-in.”

In *Amusing Ourselves to Death*, Neil Postman's 1985 excoriation of TV culture, he laments that “Americans no longer talk to each other, they entertain each other. They do not exchange ideas, they exchange images.” Television may have introduced millions of Americans to avant-garde images, but it used those images to sell stuff; along the way, something was lost.

Still, though, there's an intrepid spirit that infuses many of these older TV shows: a willingness to play and experiment with form and image, and an enthusiasm for then-new technologies. Today, the best TV shows get their inspiration not from visual art, but from movies, sticking with tried-and-true conventions of cinematic storytelling and taking few formal risks. Perhaps it's just as well. If TV is just another tab in the browser, then if we want to see art, it's no longer enough to just watch. Now, we have to look.

Lee
Friedlander,
Florida, 1963
©LEE FRIEDLANDER

IMAGE COURTESY THE JEWISH MUSEUM VIA FRAENKEL GALLERY, SAN FRANCISCO

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HATERS

Continued from page 13

writes, “securing policies favorable to capital requires conditional support from other larger classes or disunity among those who might offer resistance to any given policies. This gives the bigot a card to play,” especially when the U.S. Left and its opposite numbers in Europe find themselves struggling to offer a counter-narrative, let alone force better

policies and build movements.

Bronner isn't the first theorist to tackle the dangerous salience of racial and ethnic hatred. Wilhelm's Reich's *The Mass Psychology of Fascism* (1933) and Theodor Adorno, et. al.'s *The Authoritarian Personality* (1950) are in their own ways well-regarded classics, too. Add Bronner's to that must-read list.

We've been warned.

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